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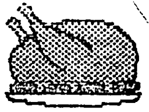

VOL. 3 NOV. 1988 NO. 11

EDITORIAL

by Hal Nason

Welcome to this late edition of BRACEBITS!!! I am sorry that it went to bed so late, especially since I did have some much appreciated help with it. However, the good news is that it is back to the customary six pages, which is the reason for the delay. Hopefully, you will receive this issue before our meeting at 7:00 P.M. this Tuesday, November 15, 1988.

I hope that you find the articles in this issue worth waiting for. You may find the article about the new "Turbo 816" 16-bit processor replacement board for the 8-bit line informative about an exciting new development for the 8-bit Atari by a third party devoloper. Another third party is involved is the Diamond project, which is a shell that operates in between the O.S. (operating system) and the user. The Diamond program allows the user to interact with the system through a graphics interface in a manner which is similar to the GEM interface used by the ST. Diamond will run on any system 64k or larger (including an 800 with memory upgrades). Diamond is being developed by ReeveSoft and will retail for $29.95.

I find it very interesting that the only products being developed for the 8-bit line (other than some hardware like the XF551 Disk Drive and the 80 column card) are being devoped by third parties. Atari may assist them slightly, as is the case with the Turbo 816, but does not wish to help create a product that will compete with the ST. Hence, they fought the development of the 8-bit emulator for the ST and are not all that co-operative in developing new technology for the 8-bit line. Atari seems to have written off the 8-bit line of computers and the only interest in 8-bits is their game system, which they hope will lead to an upgrade to the ST by the game system buyer. They don't really seem that interested in having the game system buyer expand his 8-bit system into a complete computer package, i.e. disk drive(s), modem, printer, etc. You can bet your bottom dollar, or any other item dear to your heart, that Atari will not be releasing a version of Atariwriter plus for the Diamond O.S. or Turbo 816. They won't be releasing any other software for them either, not even games. These, too, will be left to third party developers. Yes, I do realize that Atari has always relied on third party developers for most of the software for their computers (this is as true for the ST as it is for the 8-bits). However, in the past Atari was interested in supplying all of the hardware for their computers (the reason for their unique serial ports). Now they seem to have written off the 8-bit line in spite of their claim that they will never quit supporting the 8-bit. Then again, I suppose that it is inevitable that Atari will eventually stop all support for the 8-bit. Let's face it, the 16-bit (or even 32-bit) computer will be more practical for most computer users and the lack of sales will eventually provide all of the justification necessary to drop support for the 8-bit line of computers. But, even when that happens, I feel that there will be many people who have Atari 8-bits who will wish to keep them and not take on the additional expense of upgrading to an Atari ST (or any other 16-bit computer). For many of us the Atari 8-bit is all of the computer that we need.

Yes, I have seen the ST in operation and many of the things that it can do have me in awe. But, for my immediate needs, I do not need that much of a computer. Sure, the ST is faster, has more colors, better resolution, etc. All of these features are great!!! But, they are also luxuries that I can live without (at least for the present).

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Any dues paying member of B.R.A.C.E. may submit an article to the editor for publication. The deadline for submissions is the first Tuesday of the month the newsletter is due out. Articles may be edited and/or published at the discretion of the editor. Articles may be mailed to Hal Nason, 151 Todds Rd. #240, Lexington, KY 40509 or submitted via modem to Hal at (606)269-8989. AtariWriter is the preferable format, but any ASCII format will be acceptable.

B.R.A.C.E. meets the third Tuesday of the month at 7:00 p.m. The site of the meeting each month will be in room MN 263 University of Kentucky Medical Center. The public is welcome to attend our meetings but access to the library and the newsletter are limited to dues paying members of B.R.A.C.E.

Brace Minutes
by: Chris Dotson

The meeting was opened by Hal Nason. An announcement was made that the Antic Subscription has been renewed, although we may miss an issue or two. Late nominations for offices were accepted, and Greg Parsons dropped out of the Treasurer nominations. The nominations were:

Treasurer	Vice-President
Jim Cuppy	Greg Parsons Shannon Wagoner

President	Secretary
Hal Nason	Jerry Duffy Chris Dotson

The two unopposed offices were elected my acclamation. Greg Parsons was elected for Vice-President and Chris Dotson was re-elected Secretary.

Due to the fact that Greg Parsons computer had been damaged, the 8-bit emulator on the ST has been delayed until the November meeting. The impromptu demonstration was on the 1020 plotter and Screen Plot. A screen dump was done, and although the colors were a bit off (only red, blue, green, and black pens were available), the plotter rendered the image quite well, although slowly. 1020 plotters are still available for only $30, and pens and paper are available from Radio Shack. Screen Plot is available from Antic's The Catalog.

The meeting ended with check-outs from the library.

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SECRETARY/LIBRARIAN: CHRIS DOTSON

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ASST. EDITOR: CHRIS DOTSON

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Nintendo vs. Sega vs. Atari

Video games...The Next Generation.
by: Joe Tackett

And the Atari is losing, big. Nintendo has a little over 50% of the video game market right now, Sega 27%, and Atari behind with 23%. If you ask my opinon, Atari deserves it. Their games look like some Public Domain stuff that I would delete (let alone pay money for). If Atari is going to make it big again, they better start shaping up, because they've got competitors this time.

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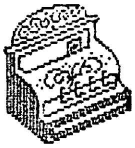

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Whatever Happened To Analog?
by: Joe Tackett

Although many Atarians have dropped their subscriptions to Analog, I still have mine. I just wanted to say that you're not missing much. Analog has turned into a nothingnith of a magazine. Half it's pages are on non-Atari things and the other half are reporting information so old that it just recently announced that Atari is soon hoping to put out a 16 bit machine(sarcasm).
(The author of this article takes no responsiblity for it's content.)

16-BIT CHIP FOR THE ATARI 8-BIT!!!

by Hal Nason and Chris Dotson

Attention 8-bit owners: Announcing the "Turbo 816" by DataQue (pronounced "da-tack"). This is a new board for all 8-bit Atari computers consisting of 5 chips, including a 65C816 processor that retains the 8-bit instruction set but has a full 16-bit instruction set, too. The product is due for introduction in mid November and will sell for $99.95 (this price will most-likely discounted by many vendors.)

The board replaces the 6502 processor in your 8-bit. It simply plugs into the socket where the 6502 was installed. Note: if you have an XL or an XE, you may have to do some resoldering to replace the 6502 chip with the Turbo 816. Designers Ron Shue and Chuck Stienman have made sure the the Turbo 816 was fully compatible with existing Atari software. They have included a "window" for a whole new world of programming possibilities. Many hackers have attempted similar projects in the past, but this is the first one that provides the dual nature needed by most Atarians.

One of the advantages of the Turbo 816 will be that all existing 8-bit software will run faster, but not that much faster. Owners will notice that the I/O routines to all devices, disk access, screen writes, joystick response will all run faster. But, the pace of most software will be unchanged. This was done in order that games and other timed-response run properly. Of course, increased speed alone is not worth a $100 dollar investment for most Atarians. But, there will be an improvement in the responsiveness of the computer. For instance, the math routines have been changed in favor of new routines that will run much faster than the routines used by a "standard" Atari. Thus the Atari will actually be useful for number crunching.

Of course, the real power of the Turbo 816 is untapped by existing software. The real power of the Turbo 816 is yet to come, but applications using the 16-bit mode will be 20% smaller and up to 20 times faster than those written for the standard 6502 chip. This chip is not limited to 64K with its paged memory, but with a fully linear decoded address space of up to 16 MEGABYTES!!! Bench marks have rated the Turbo 816 in a performance range above many of the "other" PCs!!! Also, Ron Shue has designed the Turbo 816 to have the memory registers and stacks to "hold up" under a mode-shift, thus enabling a programmer to code half of his application in the 8-bit mode and then to shift to the 16-bit mode for computation and processing and then to switch back to the 8-bit mode for more I/O, etc. Just like most memory upgrades, it will be possible to code a program to look for a Turbo 816, and if finding one in the machine, proceed with 16-bit routines, while retaining parallel 8-bit code for use by standard Atari 8-bits.

With this chip, there will be no need for that RS232.COM file or the AUTORUN.SYS file with the R: handler in it. These chips have an R: handler resident. They also have an improved floating point package.

Here's some of the exciting things planned for the Turbo 816: A multitasking program, a new assembler including the 16-bit instructions, a fast BASIC, a C development package, a Graphics Operating System, and a developers kit.

For more information see the November 1988 issue of Computer Shopper or you can contact DataQue at 3306 Bank Avenue West, P.O. Box 134, Ontario OH 44862.

The Rainbow at the End of the Pot

by: Peter K. Bellville

Reprinted from: ACCESS Key, August 1988

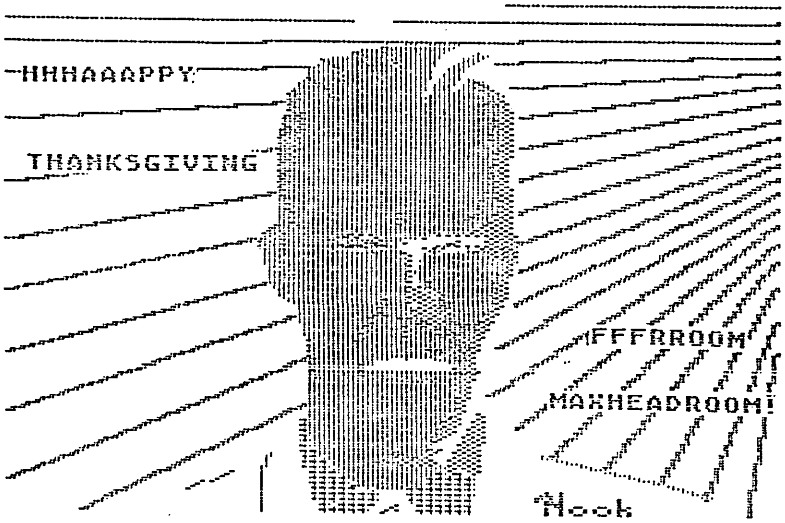
The "Power Without the Price" also meant power without the color for those of us who bought the 520ST with a monochome monitor. So, for the first year and a half I had an umbilical cord attached to various TV's. Not having two color sets, I initially used black and white for running those programs that wouldn't work in high resolution. It was that or haul the computer to the living room and connect with the family color set. Occasionally I took the TV to the computer. No matter which way I went, it was a nightmare of tangled wires to connect and disconnect. Plus, there were the complaints from the family who wanted to watch their least objectionable show. Finally, a second color TV found its way into our home and I had exclusive use of the former 17 inch set. I lived with this thing blocking traffic and taking floor space for a year. I squinted my eyes trying to read names in medium resolution. I hungered for a real color monitor. Longingly, I would stare at the price tag (large as a pot of gold) on a monitor, and with a heavy heart, go back to my TV, trying to pretend it was a real monitor.

There is a happy ending. Cheaper, but not cheap, was the Thomsom 4120 advertised by ComputAbility and others in various magazines. I have been using it for about a month now and can uneqivocally recommend it. ComputAbility sells it for $239 which includes the cable to connect with an ST. Medium resolution is 560x240 as compared to Atari's 607x166. The screen measures a healthy 13 inches diagonally while Atari's screen is 11 inches. The controls are right up front and include a green defeat switch for people who like that kind of thing. The colors are brilliant, the picture is sharp. A real suprise was the sound fidelity. Even though one advertisement did mention the improved audio capability, the full, clear, crisp sound was totally unexpected.

I found my rainbow, and the pot of gold to buy it was not so big. Things now appear on video displays that were only hinted at on the TV. Details emerge that I had no idea even existed. Now I enjoy the best of both worlds. With Monitor Master, another worthwhile product, I can easily switch between the two screens. The monochrome monitor is still the screen of choice for word and data processing. In my computer console, the two monitors sit on separate shelves, piggy-back style, with the color set on the bottom.

If anyone is considering making the jump to color as I did, the Thomson is a great choice. And if you have misgivings about mail order, ComputAbility was courteous, helpful, and fast. Go for it.

(Editor's note - ComputAbility no longer carries the Thomson 4120, and MicroTyme said that they don't carry it due to the numerous problems their customers reported with it. However, the need for it is clear, and the Atari monitor's price was not underestimated - $350!)



TERMINAL SOFTWARE COMPARISON

Reprinted from FUJI FACTS, Aug. 1988

by J. McCormick

Amodem, DeTerm, Express. all very good terminal programs, all share-ware. But which one is the best? This is my comparison of all three of these terminal programs, showing you the strong and weak points of each.

Amodem is the terminal program written by Trent Dudley. Amodem was one of the first terminal programs ever made for the Atari, and has been with us since the first bulletin boards. Amodem is written in BASIC, using machine language code throughout the program. The version I tested was Amodem 7.5.

DeTerm was written by Jim Dillow. Because it's so new, this program is unknown for the mmost part, and its main feature is a game that you can play while transferring a file, redialing boards, or when you are online with a BBS! The version I used was the 1.00b, the beta test copy.

Express! was written by Keith Ledbetter. This program is written in ACTION! and seems to be the favorite amoung most users because it's easy to use. The version I tested was 3.00.

To show the major differences between these terminal programs, here is a quick comparison chart:

Feature	Amodem	Express	DeTerm
Xmodem	yes	yes	yes
CRC	yes	yes	no
Ymodem	yes	no	no
Batch	yes(1)	no	no
Stick Input	yes	no	no
Key repeat	yes	yes	yes
Word Wrap	yes	yes	yes
Scrolling	yes(2)	no	no
Game	no	no	yes(3)
Menus	27	38	37
PCP(4)	good	little	excellent
Smartmacro	yes	no	no
BBSMacros	1	3	4
Timer	yes	yes	yes
Clock	yes	yes(5)	no
Bootup(6)	1:07	1:05	1:10
Length	176	254	198
Buffer Size(7)	4352	5504	7168
Docs	Excellent	Excellent	Average
Send Time(8)	2:00	1:58	2:23
Rcvd Time(8)	2:06	1:53	2:23

(1) Amodem has Ymodem batch RECEIVE

(2) Only with XE/XL models

(3) A game of Pong that can be played anytime on or offline

(4)Macro/Program support for P.C. Pursuit by Telenet

(5) A real-time clock is available if you use SpartaDOS's TDLINE

(6) Time needed to boot the terminal program using SpartaDOS 3.2 in doulble density with a simple STARTUP.BAT file

(7) size of capture buffer with SpartaDOS 3.2

(8) This is the time taken for the terminal program to receive and send an 85 block file at 1200 baud

Amodem

Amodem is the terminal program that I choose as being the best. It has features that the other terminal programs did not, Y-modem, Ymodem batch receive, smart macro, smooth scrolling for XE?XL computers, good documentation, a fast transfer time, and joystick input. The only real argument I have against Amodem is that you have only 1 macro containing your password for each BBS on your list. this problem doesn't seem too big, since you have 10 "smart" macros that are always there.

DeTerm

DeTerm was the clear loser in most areas. Its transfer rate was sluggish (1 block every 1.68 seconds at 1200 baud), which was caused by a long delay in between each block. However, there are two features that make it an excellent terminal progrogram DeTerm has full P.C. Pursuit support. It will re-dial cities unti you reach one, and it will load the city's phone list for you to dial with! The breakout game was its other big feature. The game does seem a bit buggy, but, it actually feels like multi-tasking without any pauses or jerky movement, no matter what you are doing! However, the documentation is only average, and I do not recommend this program for a beginner.

Express!

Express has the fastest transfer rate of all the terminal programs tested. Downloading at 1200 baud, it averaged one block every 1.33 seconds. Also, it is very user-friendly. My major complaint against Express is the macros, and the lack of Ymodem protocal. The macros are great, in that you may have 3 for each BBS. However, they are "dumb" macros. They will not react to input from the BBS. If you are using P.C. Pursuit, three little macros are not going to do much good.

Some things I would like to see in all of these programs are a Ymodem batch send, where you may mark finles in your directory to send. Also, for those of us who don't really want to waste the time seeing what we are downloaking, how about an option to turn the screen off and touse the extra speed for the transfer?

That's the end of my comparison. If you do not agree with my results, calll yp the Syndicate BBS and tell me your opinion! I'd be glad to hear it.

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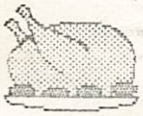

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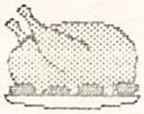

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COME TO THE NEXT MEETING OF BRACE
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